

Development of Houston Veterans' Court

- **Incarcerated Veterans**
- **Suicide Rates in Returning Veterans**
- **PTSD in Returning Veterans**
- **Why we need Veterans' Courts**
- **Importance of Community Partnerships**
- **Unique Features of Houston Court**
- **Status Report**
- **Clean Up**

Facts Regarding Incarcerated Veterans

- **9.3% of people incarcerated are Vets (Dept of Justice, 2002)**
- **At a minimum, 90,000 Vets are released from jails annually; 29,000 from prisons**
- **82% are eligible for VA services**
- **70% non-violent crime offense**
- **60% have a substance dependency**
- **> 30% have serious mental illness**
- **20% homeless year prior to incarceration**
- **60% have a serious medical problem (AIDS, Hep C, TB)**

Suicide and the Veteran

National Statistics on Suicide

- The Center for Disease Control's National Violent Death Reporting System demonstrated that **21-25%** of all suicides are among the veteran population.
- A 2007 mortality study of 320,890 men found that veterans were **twice** as likely to die of suicide compared with non-veterans in the general population (Kaplan, et al. 2007)

Returning Veterans and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

- The Military's Mental Health Advisory Team V found that **15-20%** of all soldiers fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan show signs of depression or PTSD (increases to **30%** for those with 3-4 deployments).

(Source: USA Today, *A Fifth of Soldiers at PTSE Risk*, March 7, 2008, Greg Zoroya)

Returning Veterans and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

- A study on 2,863 soldiers from 4 Army combat infantry brigades surveyed 1 year after Iraq found **16.6%** met the screening criteria for PTSD (Hoge, C. et al., 2007)

Why Houston Needs a Veterans' Court



- **Number of incarcerated veterans has increased***
- **Pretrial Services estimates between 350 to 450 vets booked into Harris County jail each month. Many for minor non-violent crimes**
- **25% of veterans incarcerated in local jails have mental illness vs. 15% of nonveteran population***
- **Harris County Jail -25% of detainees with mental illness****
- **Veterans make up approximately 1/5 of Houston's homeless population, estimate some 3000 homeless veterans in Houston**

* From: Bureau of Justice Statistics' Special Report: *Veterans in Prison and Jail* (2000)

** From: MHMRA (2009)

Planning a Veterans' Court

Working with Community Partners



Planning and Implementation of Veterans' Court

Unique Features of Houston Court

- **Development of Jail Diversion Treatment Team (*Pilot – 6 months*)**
- **Accept Variety of Offenses**
- **Accept Variety of Diagnoses**

Planning and Implementation of Veterans' Court

Veteran Eligibility Criteria for Court

- **Defendant must meet the following criteria:**
 - Honorable Discharge, on active duty or in reserves
 - Have pending eligible misdemeanor or felony offense
 - Be a legal resident of/or citizen of the United States of America
 - Be a resident of Harris and/or surrounding Counties
 - Have mental health, TBI, and/or substance use diagnoses
 - Criminal offense must be related to the diagnosis
- **Exclusions:**
 - Pending case is either; Sexual offenses, drug delivery or all 3G offenses with the exception of aggravated assault.
 - Prior conviction or deferred adjudication for sexual assault or 3G offense with the exception of aggravated assault.
 - Is seriously and persistently mentally ill and cannot participate
 - Has previously been terminated or graduated from Veterans' Court

Houston Veterans' Court

Current Status of 12 Veterans

| Service | Charges | Legal Status | Diagnoses |
|---|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5 OEF/OIF• 4 Persian Gulf• 2 Post-Vietnam• 1 Vietnam | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3 Probation Violations• 3 Assault• 4 Possession• 1 Forgery | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7 Deferred Adjudication• 4 Pretrial Diversion• 1 Probation | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 10 Dual Diagnoses (Substance Use Disorder and Primary Mental Health Diagnoses – PTSD, Depression, Anxiety, Bipolar)• 1 Psychotic Disorder• 1 Substance Use Disorder• 2 Traumatic Brain Injury |

Clean Up

- **Jurisdiction for Misdemeanors and Felony offenses**
- **Less restrictive language to best meet the needs of veterans and the criminal justice system**
- **Language to include the possibility of violent offenses**